

THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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PREPARING FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION.

By Dr. MARION PHILLIPS,

Chief Woman Officer of the Labour Party.

With the possibility—which many people think a certainty—of a General Election within three months, every responsible officer is thinking over the situation and is especially considering the organisation of the women's vote. There is no doubt about it that with the women's vote Labour is easily invincible, but although two elections have passed since first they were on the register there are still many who have had a very small education in politics, and who must therefore receive very special attention.

To gain the women's vote the first step is to organise a strong body of women workers in a constituency. This is, of course, one of the main purposes of the women's sections, but as an election draws near it is obvious that we must give these women workers themselves all the help that we can. Canvassing is still the best means of securing votes, and for good canvassing a voluntary woman worker who is a member of the party cannot be bettered. For a description of the main lines which canvassing and mass canvassing should take, I can refer the reader to our pamphlet on "Women's Work in the Labour Party," price 6d. But there are certain things which have to be done as preparation for each particular election in order that the canvasser may have full confidence in her power to deal with the main issues. It is essential that special attention should be given to advising her upon these. I think it would be advisable if every agent would get together all his women workers for a series of meetings on canvassing points dealing with the principal subjects which will occupy public attention during the election. A canvasser should have two lines of defence. On the one hand she should be fully prepared to explain the main points of Labour's policy, and on the other to be able to point out the fallacies and failings in the policy of the other side. It should, however, always be impressed upon every worker that it is more important to get supporters for Labour

policy than to devote time entirely to the criticism of Labour's opponents. An enthusiastic supporter is always worth more than a half-convinced opponent or than a person who votes Labour because the other side is wrong more than because Labour is right. Psychology plays an important part in elections, and an affirmative state of mind is worth far more than a negative. For that reason I think it is wise in giving suggestions to canvassers to take Labour's policy on particular subjects as the first thing, and these subjects for the coming elections (if they do come) are Unemployment, Housing, and the Capital Levy. Short statements should be given to the canvassers on each of these matters, and they should be fully explained at one of the meetings to which I have referred. The line taken should be to describe Labour's policy and then to give the main points of failure of the present Government. In regard to Unemployment, it is very important to deal with Labour's international policy upon the subject and to give some practical examples of the trades in which trade would have been improved by a full recognition of Russia and by saving Austria and Germany from their present state of ruin. Another very important point is the failure of the Government to do anything to save the young people from 14 to 18 from useless idleness and their complete neglect in all their schemes of provision for the unemployed women. The Tory refusal at the Plymouth Conference to accept Lady Astor's proposal about the young boys and girls is very valuable in this respect. The same line should be taken with regard to Housing, and in dealing with the Capital Levy efforts should be made to show your women workers exactly what it means, and they should also be able to explain the misrepresentations of the policy which were so frequent at the last election and will be equally frequent at the next. There may, of course, be some other issues which are special to a particular

area; for example, the rural problem specially in relation to Wages Boards is very important for county divisions.

When you come to the negative side the main subject, of course, is that of Protection, and in dealing with the women voters attention must be specially directed to the increase in prices which necessarily follows a protective policy. Particular stress must be laid upon this because for the housewife nothing is more important than the lowering of the standard of life which has been going on in past years, and the further fall in this which would result from tariffs specially on food and necessaries. In dealing with Protection as a cure for unemployment, a few useful facts should be given showing the amount of unemployment which has existed and still exists in countries with high protective duties. At the present moment we know of no other special issue which the Government will put forward. It is, however, necessary to give a canvasser a list of the well-known subjects of attack which the Tory Party make against the Labour Party. She should be able to inform the enquirer of the truth in regard to these subjects. She should be able to explain that the Labour Party is not against religion, does not believe in free love, does not propose to break up the family, and does not take orders from the Third International at Moscow. On the other hand she should understand what Socialism means and not be put upon the defensive if she is asked whether the Labour Party is a Socialist Party. The Labour Party has declared that its aim is a Socialist aim and its workers should therefore be able to explain what that means and not apologise in any way at all.

I would make one last suggestion which I have often made before but which always needs to be remembered, and that is that every worker taking literature to distribute should know what is in that literature itself. Above all, it is important that the worker should not go about her task in any spirit of apology either for her own amount of knowledge or for her membership of a Party which may not be popular in the particular district where she is canvassing. Confidence in her own convictions goes a very long way in creating that feeling of success for the Labour cause which is a very important feature in every electoral victory.

THE PRINTED WORD.

By J. W. KNEESHAW.

This is not a grouse or a grumble, though it may seem like it. It is an appeal to secretaries, agents, and everybody else who matters, to bring into use a weapon which at present, in many parts of the country, is in almost complete disuse. You may travel from one end of the country to the other addressing meetings all the way and back again, and the rarest experience you would have would be the sight of a well-stocked literature stall, or a well-organised attempt to sell literature. Will any agent, secretary, or other person who matters, explain to me this thushness? I'm longing to know the why and wherefore of it.

You spend money on halls and advertising, you assemble audiences of enquiring burgesses, you turn on speakers who tickle 'em or teach 'em, or both, you pass a vote of thanks to the speaker and say good-night to your audience—and hey presto! That's all! Now what are meetings held for at all, at all?

To convert the erring multitude, of course: and the spoken word is a great seduction. It brings together the better part of that erring multitude, the most hopeful part of it, the part that is beginning to have a faint flickering shadow of doubt that all is not well and that something ought to be done. Under the spell of the spoken word they will cheer and "feel" that this is surely all right; but without that "feeling" can be reinforced with knowledge the effect of the meeting will speedily be dissipated.

The chief purpose of a meeting is to create and quicken a desire for information about the Party's work and purpose and to respond to that desire with a ready and full supply of information *whilst the desire is still hot*.

The literature department of a meeting is, or should be, more important than the platform. It is there, at the literature stall that you catch 'em alive-o!

The business of the platform is to infuse life into more or less comatose bodies. When the platform has done that, has transformed a merely curious crowd into a vitally interested assembly of partisans, to open the doors and let it all evaporate without the most skilled

AN EXPLANATION.

"Labour Organiser" readers will, we are sure, accept with readiness the explanation of the absence from this month's issue of several customary features.

The Editor having been called away from home to conduct the Warwick and Leamington By-election, the present issue has not been produced without difficulty.

The Editor desires to thank the several contributors who responded to his call for help, and we are sure our readers will appreciate the freshness and variety of the articles so readily penned by loyal friends.

and energetic attempt to rivet any of it down to Party literature, is a most extravagant way of demonstrating that we don't know our business.

I know I am not exaggerating when I say that the Party is every year holding not only large demonstrations but hundreds of smaller meetings as well, at which not a scrap of literature is on sale, which means that many thousands of people, who by their very presence at our meetings have a desire to know something more about us are never given the chance of seeing, or even of knowing, that the Party issues any information by means of the printed word.

Is there any reason why this should continue? If there is let's have it out! If there is not, then for the purpose of gaining the biggest result by our outlay of energy and cash, let's have literature secretaries appointed everywhere, and good, presentable literature stalls designed and constructed. And see to it also that some good salesman—not necessarily the chairman or speaker, who are often duffers at that job—be given a place on the agenda for the purpose of pushing the literature.

A listening public we now have got, and that is good. If we can transform that into a reading public—"all other things will be added unto us!"

THE PRIMROSE LEAGUE.

We quote the following from a Tory textbook on organisation. It may be read with interest and profit as a sidelight on our opponents' schemes:—

No one can deny the great work which the Primrose League has done throughout the length and breadth of the land. Especially is this so in the country districts, where a habitation will often supply the motive power for a winter campaign, and draw to its meetings numbers who would not otherwise be attracted to ordinary political gatherings. The same may be said of the work of the Primrose League in working-class centres of population.

But, whilst generally admitting and admiring the way in which the League has sought to make brighter the lives of the working classes, there is a danger sometimes that its work may become too social and not sufficiently and aggressively political. The candidate or member, whilst readily accepting the help provided by the workers of the Primrose League, should not too closely identify himself with the working of the organisation. It should, if possible, be officered by persons different from those who hold high official positions in the Conservative Association, and, so far as possible, the ruling councillor and the secretary should not undertake any distinctly political or organising work: otherwise it may be quite impossible to decide, in an election petition, where the agency of the candidate ends in the Association, and where it begins with members of the League; but though the habitation may assist in political work, it should always do so in a subsidiary position.

The Primrose League should, as its name and proposed objects indicate, be an absolutely independent organisation, carrying forward its own propaganda, doing its own work, breaking down the asperities of class feeling, disseminating sound political teaching and doing all this with the graciousness so natural to its dames. Yet so absolutely independent ought the Primrose League to be that there never should be any chance given for holding the member or candidate responsible for the acts of the League or of any of its members, either on the ground of agency or otherwise.

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SOME RURAL PROBLEMS.

By S. J. GEE,

Agent, North Norfolk Division.

The problem which faces our organisers in rural districts is a complicated one and one that needs to be tackled in a methodical and practical manner. The breaking up of the virgin soil in a rural Parliamentary Division is both a back-aching and heart-breaking job, requiring on the agent's part large reserves of patience, tact, resource and enthusiasm. One of the initial problems which has to be faced is the organisation of village public meetings. In the early days of the development of the Labour movement in rural and semi-rural districts, the usual method was to get into touch with the local branch, if one existed, of one of the unions catering for the agricultural workers, and through the branch to seek an opportunity of addressing an open meeting of the members and friends; and in some districts even now the putting up of half a dozen skeleton posters in the village is enough to draw a number of men to hear the Labour message; but from past and somewhat recent experience we find it necessary to do more than this if we want a maximum number of persons to turn up.

The old method had obvious drawbacks, in spite of the splendid services of the local union branch secretaries, who deserve all praise for their sterling fidelity to our cause at the always-present risk of victimisation and eviction.

The drawbacks were (1) that meeting under the auspices of the union, men only turned up, even though women had been especially invited on the bills. The women did not think that they were in it, because they associate the union meeting with their menfolk and as their affair only; (2) That union branch meetings mostly meet in the inn club rooms. This was another drawback to the presence of women, who for the most part do not like to attend meetings in the inns; the same objection applies to those in the village who possess religious and temperance scruples; (3) That the fact of having these meetings under union auspices tends to stimulate in the average labourer's mind a feeling which has been largely prevalent in the past, that

the Labour Party is an annex to the union and that therefore the union twopence per year affiliation fee per member is all that is necessary in order to maintain political organisation in their division, and our appeal for the shilling per minimum has been looked upon as an extra, which was superfluous and quite optional. A further objection to Labour Party meetings being held under union auspices was that they tended to limit attendances to the agricultural labourers only, and that other classes of the village community got the impression that the meetings were for the labourers only, with the result that village school teachers, the clergy, shopkeepers, small-holders and the enlightened farmers, some of whom everywhere are honest enquirers as to our Labour Party principles, programme, and policy, and some of whom we ought to have within our ranks, were kept away.

It was after deliberation of these considerations that our Divisional Committee decided at the commencement of this autumn's campaign, to hold all our meetings outside the walls of inn club rooms wherever practicable. We therefore have our meetings in the village schools, which in this county we can have for an inclusive charge of 7/6 per night, which includes caretaker's fee, and the provision of heating and lighting, which latter amenities we insist upon being adequately provided. We then send our stock skeleton posters to our most energetic local worker with a note, asking him to get them out in the polling district. Handbills are then printed which contain on the back one of the attractive cartoons issued by the "Landworker"; some of those in recent issues of this splendid journal have been excellent for this purpose. Lately we have been planning a run of meetings, say four per week on successive evenings.

I have usually gone on the pedal cycle from home on the Monday morning to the village schools in the polling district, where our meeting is billed for the evening, and delivered the handbills to the school children, who carry them home to their parents, and also visited some of the electors. By these means we have usually secured an attendance at the meeting equal to ten per cent. of the total electorate in the polling district. There is also the advantage in staying in the homes of the people, for one gets valuable in-

IF WINTER COMES— A Russian Winter

Do you realise what this means?

Blankets, Warm Clothing, Boots, Educational Material
all are needed by the little RUSSIAN ORPHANS

In THE KEIR HARDIE HOME
THE INTERNATIONAL HOME
THE TWO ROBERT OWEN HOMES

These homes are in Orenberg and Tsaritsyn. Many of the children still suffer from the after effects of the famine. Malaria is common necessitating extra nourishment and care.

WHAT IS YOUR TRADES COUNCIL, BRANCH
OR GUILD DOING?
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO BEFORE
WINTER COMES?

"Workers of the world, unite, you have everything to gain" by helping the future citizens of the FIRST WORKERS' REPUBLIC.

One of them in the Keir Hardie Home writes:—

"When I grow up I will work and will send what I can for your children."

Gifts of money, clothing, educational material gratefully received by HELEN CRAWFURD (Secretary), Children's Homes Department, Workers' International Russian Relief, 26 Bedford Row, London, W.C. 1.

Russian Peasant Industries

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

SANTA CLAUS IS EXPECTED

Why not buy your presents from the Workers' International Russian Relief Committee?

Beautiful Russian peasant handicraft Toys, Necklaces, Bracelets, Brooches, Lace, etc.

All profits go to support the little Russian Famine Orphans in our homes in Russia

Send for particulars to—

HELEN CRAWFURD, Secretary,
Children's Homes Dept., W.I.R.,
26 Bedford Row, London, W.C.1

formation as to the conditions ruling in the neighbourhood and as to the personalities of the likely people to become the officers of the local Labour Party.

The programme of the village meeting needs careful preparation. We start at 7.30 p.m., and if it is a moonlight night we usually find a good muster waiting for us, among whom will be several stalwarts of the Labourers' Union, who, in so many places lead the way in all things of progress. Two speakers are enough and we draw on those who live nearest to the place of meeting; our speakers do not mind a four-mile cycle ride to a meeting if they go in pairs. We start with some of our I.L.P. songs. I sometimes get in an informal talk before the meeting "officially" begins; something of local interest, perhaps, dealing with the history of the village, as to its acreage, etc. We have been able to obtain from a Research Department in London, a short land history of every one of our parishes in our division, which has proved useful in this connection.

During the evening, at that psychological moment which we agents have to study so much, we announce that a collection hat (usually my old tweed) will be at the door, and with the announcement a brief explanation that the collection is to defray the expenses of the hire, and printing. We do this because we find that if our meetings go on after 9.30 p.m., then one labourer and then another will go out. We have to remember that some of these men have walked perhaps the best part of three miles to the meeting, and that they have to walk home and be up for work at five o'clock next morning.

It has to be something exceptionally good to keep all of them in a meeting at an hour which we can carry on in the towns. Recently, owing to a galaxy of good speakers turning up at one of our meetings, which included an M.A. (Cantab.), a B.A. (Oxon.), a retired solicitor from London, and a French schoolmaster, the meeting went on until after ten o'clock, and no one went out until the conclusion of our meeting; and the still more remarkable thing was that it was not the subject of agriculture which keep the audience of mostly agricultural labourers, but "Foreign Affairs." But the platform which we had was good enough for the Essex Hall. But that was exceptional that evening.

A feature of this autumn's campaign is the interest being shown in the speeches of some of our local Labour men, who recently spent a week in Berlin under the auspices of the Workers' Travel Association. Their story of what they have seen and heard has helped to create additional interest and has a distinct educational value for the cause of International Goodwill.

In putting the case for the establishment of a local Labour Party to a body of village people, we have found it best not to concentrate on a mere exhortation to join up and pay up. We endeavour to find out the particular grievances of the villagers; in one place the cottages are insanitary; in another there is a grievous lack of cottage accommodation; in another, where cottages have been erected by the Rural District Council, the rents are so high that no labourer can live in them; in another place, the village school is in bad repair, forms are too small or too old or uncomfortable, or there is a nasty hole in the schoolroom floor; in another, the roads are exceptionally bad and the "lokes" (Norfolk word for the small parish roads) are impassible, and one is the only means to the school, and so on. Everywhere there are glaring discrepancies of this sort in our villages. Then we get the folk discussing what is to be done and we help to put them on to the right authority. A letter is mooted; but who is to send the letter. If Jim or Jack, as individuals, send it, they are afraid that they will be marked men and listed for the "sack" at the earliest opportunity, and with the "sack" goes eviction from his cottage home. Sometimes a petition is suggested, a document which all can sign and which, therefore, becomes impersonal. Next, the constitution, powers and duties of the Parish Council may be considered, for in many villages and hamlets the knowledge of these matters is scanty. Then we may survey, on another evening, the constitution, powers and duties of the Rural District Councils, with which are merged, for election purposes, the Boards of Guardians. All this, of course, leads inevitably to the need and importance of Labour representation on these bodies and the need for a local Labour Party, which shall be a group of men and women who will act as a vigilance committee on things locally. In this connection we have found the Fabian Tracts, on

Parish Councils, 2d. each, most useful, and also the Head Office "Handbook of Local Government."

One of the methods of propaganda which we have found useful, has been to fight every Rural District Council Bye-Election. The contests stimulate interest and enable our workers to canvass every elector, which is quite an impossible proposition at the general Rural District Elections, for the parishes are so very extensive. We do not usually hold meetings at these bye-elections; our candidates and workers preferring to canvass instead in the daylight, and we have secured Labour gains by this method. Next March, many of these elections are due, and we are hoping to make a grand attack on these strongholds of the squires, parsons, and big farmers, and their agents. It is rather interesting to note in connection with the Rural elections that whilst the reactionary majorities on many of our Rural County Councils plead that they cannot find polling stations for every parish at the Parliamentary and County Council Elections, yet the Rural District Councils find, with the greatest ease, the polling stations as they are obliged to do for these Rural District Council Elections. The great drawback at present to a large increase in Labour representation on these bodies in rural districts, is not that we cannot win the seats so much as the difficulty of our possible candidates getting to the Council meetings owing to distance, employment, and lack of means.

Agents and Labour workers contemplating the undertaking of much rural political campaigning, will do well to consider the important matter of clothing and equipment for this work. A pair of heavy farm boots, a pair of leggings, a pair of waterproof trousers (which come up well over the knees), and a long waterproof cape, and a tweed hat, are the essentials. A pair of flannel trousers and a tweed jacket and waistcoat, I find most comfortable. Add to these a 1-inch scale map showing all roads, railways and stations, woods and plantations and churches and parish boundaries with the Parliamentary Division shaded in colour (such as published by Standens, of Long Acre, London, W.C.), and also a good electric torch, and the equipment is complete.

Registration in rural districts needs constant attention. So many people move, and the men lodgers, and the wives becoming 30, are so easily missed by the parish local Registration Officers, for they largely make up their list from their rate books, which, of course, give them no indication as to these names. I usually carry the register of the villages which I am visiting, with me, for they are useful in many ways in checking the names and addresses, and they also serve as a directory to the parish.

Our Labour future lies in the rural districts to a great extent, and if we can tackle the rural problem in a systematic way, great gains are before us. I tell of my own experience in the hope it may be of use to others and help to lighten their pathway. We in the rural districts are learning all the time and none of us have yet reached finality in the things to learn.

The exchange of thought and idea is what is necessary so that we can help one another. Our comrades in the towns and cities of England are learning as we have, I hope, learnt, that the countryman is no fool, and that he has possibly a more retentive mind than the townsman; because, living in the wide spaces he has more opportunity for reflection, but he will respond to the thoughtful appeal; he may be a slow learner, but when once he sees the light he will hold it fast.

YOUNG MEN WANTED.

In counties a number of young non-voters should be organised into a cycle corps for distributing notices of meetings, election literature, and answers to opposition statements, and for quick and direct communication with each village in the constituency. Such volunteers should be assigned to a particular district or route, to include so many villages and a daily or tri-weekly visitation may be made in the evening with the local sub-agent, and if possible with the village correspondent, who, if need be, should leave any special bill or notice at each house in the village or hamlet. Election literature is read in the country, though it is often wasted by being scattered broadcast in a town.

YES—THEY WILL READ ELECTION LITERATURE!

By HAROLD CROFT,
Agent, Croydon.

Do the people read election literature? My answer is: Yes! if it is the right sort! The essential thing is to give the electors precise information on the matters which agitate *their* minds. To do this simply and convincingly requires much thought—much planning and much work. The great error is to assume that the subjects which interest the active Labour circle are as clear as daylight to a C3 electorate, and that this electorate will digest perorating paragraphs on big principles. Because the electors mostly refuse to be beguiled by this latter sort of literature, there is a disposition to believe, on the part of some electioneers, that the public will not read political circulars, and therefore they go to the other extreme of issuing leaflets so terse as to be in effect “bones without meat.”

I have just been concerned with some municipal elections which have given rather favourable results for Labour. Hard work by devoted ward members and organisation have perhaps been the major factors in securing successes, but an essential and integral factor has undoubtedly been the issue of topical literature. When the candidates and executive first met to discuss addresses, etc., the sentiment which found ready expression was, “Now, Tom, Dick, and Sarah won’t read election stuff, so cut it short.” Whereupon I contested this sentiment, and argued that the public *would* read addresses provided we took care to give them facts and information on the matters they were directly interested in at the present time.

We were not in the same position as the reactionaries, who could appeal to prejudice, and by display headlines shouting admonitions to “Keep the Socialists out, or your Rates will go up,” pull their supporters and unreflecting electors to the poll.

Labour necessarily has to present a case—has to appeal to reason—and must overcome this difficulty by getting its case to men and women in the most convincing and fetching way. If we want to get victory votes on housing we must present the local case and issues on housing to the electorate. If we are to smash the reactionaries on the rates’ question we *must* argue a rates’ case.

What is at fault in most local elections is that the members of the party—the speakers and even the candidates—too often have a most inadequate grasp of municipal questions. The useful information is mostly locked in the minds of two or three councillors, who are apt to assume that the rest of the party are as cognisant of affairs as they themselves are.

The organiser must get salient information printed for circulation amongst the party and for the electorate. My first effort in this direction was to call speakers and members together to hear and discuss four lecturettes on phases of the local housing question, but the copious flow of facts, while illuminating, could not be collected and retained for re-use by the speakers. The next effort was a more fruitful one. I devoted an issue of our monthly circular to members to the presenting of the local case on housing, a local case on public health, and a local case on rates. This production met a need, and our speakers, canvassers and members were well-equipped for the public side of our local electioneering. We had a municipal election contest in which actually our own municipal affairs were the basis of practically every speech and mere perorating was at a discount. The next step was to get our case to the electorate; two or three thousands of the monthly circular itself were distributed to the electors, and immediately had a pronounced effect, right away showing that the people would read matter on their own town’s affairs. But this circular was too costly a proposition for general distribution to the whole electorate.

A final circular of foolscap size was produced and on the back was reprinted the article on the housing scandal, giving a resumé of the local position, and with telling headlines as to the 5,000 shortage—the overcrowding figures; bribes to builders; and Labour’s demands, etc.

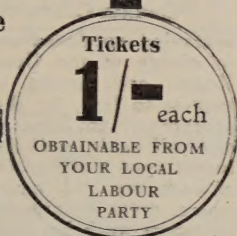
The voting appeal on the front was carefully planned, and every sentence was related to the political psychology of the moment. Pointed paragraphs on rates, housing, unemployment, season and workmen’s fares, etc., phrased and framed in a direct and attacking style against the reactionaries, forced them to take the defensive and to argue, and when reactionaries argue honest men can come by their own.

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First Prize

£250



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In aid of the Local Labour Parties
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IN the coming General Election
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welcome contributions to their
Election Funds.

The Great Labour Ballot will meet
this need, for during the next few
weeks people will be interested in
the possibility of a Labour Govern-
ment, and choosing a Labour
Government, which is what com-
petitors are asked to do in the
Ballot, will be more than ever popu-
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the "man in the street."

Open your Election Fund at once,
by sending to-day for books of
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retary.

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Send in your order at once—next month may be too late.

THE BALLOT IS QUITE LEGAL.

SOME NOTES ON ELECTION ORGANISATION.

By H. E. ROGERS,
Labour Agent, Bristol East.

In view of the prospects of an early General Election, I will deal with the above phase of our party work.

I am afraid that most agents are forced to undertake so much work that they are unable to devote as much attention to some of the important details as they would wish, or to consider the psychological atmosphere of their constituency, which often changes from day to day. Very often a seat is lost through lack of attention to this important point.

The first duty of an agent in any election should be to evolve a policy of expenditure. Knowing how much money will be at his disposal he should allocate a sum for Printing, Advertising, Meetings, Committee Rooms, and Wages, leaving a large margin to meet any emergency which may arise towards the end of the campaign. It will also enable you to decide what items shall be sacrificed, or where economy may be practised with safety. Having budgeted in this way, these figures should be strictly adhered to, otherwise the finances with which the Party is not particularly flushed, will slip through one's fingers before one realises it, and important work will have to be neglected for lack of funds.

The agent should then draw up his plan of campaign, based on the principle of economy of effort, with efficiency. He should utilise all assistance available in such a manner as to obtain 100 per cent. result. In every election we complain of not having a sufficiency of workers, and having prepared a plan, it will enable you to obtain better results with the material available than by floundering about with many workers and no plan to guide your action.

Someone, a good clerk preferably, should be appointed to take charge of the Central Committee Room, where all writing, folding, and dispatching should be done. Unfortunately many of our members who are unemployed, imagine that because there is an election taking place they should be employed, and very often they are most unsuited for the office that is to be filled.

Agents will have to realise that an election is a very serious business. It should be a fight to a finish and nothing whatever should be left to chance. Every conceivable opportunity should be used to push our candidates and our policy before the people.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE ROOM.

Having appointed a suitable person in charge of the Central Committee Room, and having explained one's request to him, he should be left to prepare all envelopes, canvass cards, and poll cards, and should submit a report upon work achieved at the end of each day. I have known cases where quite a large amount of unnecessary work has been done by our workers.

A great saving can be effected by enclosing the candidate's election address in an envelope addressed, "With the Labour Candidate's Compliments"; this could be printed across the envelope and delivered from house to house quite early in the campaign. Then it would only be necessary to address one set of envelopes for the poll cards and final appeal, these to be delivered by post a day or so before polling day. Names need not be written on the polling cards, but the numbers could be printed and care exercised that the cards are placed in the right envelopes, the polling number having been written on the top left-hand corner of the envelope, as the address is copied from the register.

A saving can also be effected by pasting each sheet of the register, printed on one side only, on a plain card. This should not be done unless there is a dearth of workers, because it is far preferable to prepare a canvass card for each elector, so that on polling day each person can be treated separately.

THE WARD COMMITTEES.

The Ward organisation should not be concerned with the addressing of envelopes, etc., but should be left entirely free to canvass the district and distribute the literature. The Ward Secretary should be responsible to the agent for the organisation, canvassing, and distribution of literature in his own Ward, and at the close of each day make a return to the agent of the work accomplished, such as, number of electors canvassed, number of promises "For," "Against," and "Doubtful,"

General Election



GOOD PRINTING

At election times, when Labour Literature must hold its own against the—in most cases—more costly printing of our opponents, it is essential that it should be good. It should be as good as our policy and the ideals for which we stand, in fact the BEST

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the number of streets where literature has been delivered. This would enable the agent to know every day what progress was being made, and if areas were short of workers he would know to what places he should draft workers, and where to concentrate on polling day.

THE WOMEN'S SECTION.

It is far preferable for the members of the Women's Section to work in conjunction with the Ward Committee for the area where they reside, and under the direction of the Ward organisation, than running all over the constituency and wasting a great deal of time.

MEETINGS.

Someone should be made responsible for the arrangement of all meetings, notifying all speakers, making arrangements for chairmen, stewards for meeting, the arrangements for the reporters to report the meeting, etc. Too many meetings should not be held, they will only attract your workers from more important work and your returns in votes rarely justify the expenditure on printing, rent of halls, and the efforts of your speakers. Of course, some meetings are necessary to place our policy before the electorate, but they should always be kept at a minimum.

CANVASSING.

The foundation of any success at elections is to be found in systematic canvassing. I would suggest that no election can be won apart from canvassing. You are unable to work effectively on polling day, and your committee rooms are most ineffective apart from having previously ascertained the opinion of the electors by canvassing. If it is necessary, meetings should be sacrificed for work upon the door-step, because it will bring you a better return.

ADVERTISING.

It is always wise to appoint someone to see to it that the candidate gets a good show in advertising. Fly-posting, and hoardings should be utilised. Quite a great deal of effective advertisement can be secured by an effective display of the candidate's photo-card in the windows of the electors. Just as huge fortunes have been built up upon advertisements, so must the Labour candidate build up his majority, by

keeping his name and the policy of his Party continually before the people. Personally, I am inclined to think that money spent upon advertisement is never lost.

In this summary I have not dealt with the many details of electioneering, but I have only outlined the broad principles upon which the campaign should be run. If the agent sees to it that each position is filled with live men who will pay attention to details, his life will become more bearable during the campaign, and a better state of efficiency should be obtained. The agent would be able to supply a report of work accomplished by each department at very short notice, and would be in a much better position to co-ordinate all the various activities connected with a General Election.

THE BALLOT PAPER ACCOUNT.

THOUGHTFUL LEGISLATORS!

By W. STEWART RAINBIRD,
Labour Agent, East Ham.

The "towny" agent not only lives amongst streets; he talks streets, thinks streets, and often, very often, curses streets.

He is never so sensitive about streets, not streets of houses, of course, but streets of electors, as when a count is in progress. He knows from the published particulars just which streets have polled in a particular ballot box. Hence the ballot box is a sphinx, whose secret he must penetrate.

The brunt of the inquisition falls often upon some hapless counting agent who is tuned to listen-in to the merest whisper of verification of the contents of the ballot box he guards, or who becomes a prowling "Peeping Tom," all eyes glimpsing and memorising figures from the returning officer's copy of the ballot paper account.

There is justification for all this anxious trouble. The total poll, whether in a section or for the whole polling district, is worth knowing, because the knowledge may be usefully applied in a number of ways.

The gentlemen who presided at the birth of the Ballot Act in Queen Vic's days seem to have had some pre-vision of the agents' needs!

Listen to 35 and 36 Vict., ch. 33, rule 37:—

"Upon completion of the counting . . . the returning officer . . . shall proceed, in the presence of the agents of the candidates, to verify the ballot paper account given by each presiding officer, by comparing it with the number of ballot papers recorded by him as aforesaid . . . The returning officer shall report to the Clerk of the Crown the result of such verification, and shall, on request, allow any agents of the candidates, before such report is sent, to copy it."

The ballot paper account is made up in form similar to the following:—

Polling Station at
 Date
 Number of ballot papers received from
 Returning Officer (exclusive of ten-
 dered ballot papers)
 Number in the ballot box
 Number unused
 Number spoilt
 Total

Thus the ballot paper account contains the number polled in each ballot box in each polling station, and it is accessible upon application.

Note that in the case of a Parliamentary election the returning officer reports to the Clerk of the Crown, but in the case of a municipal election to the Town Clerk (35 and 36 Vict., ch. 33, Sched. I., Part II., rule 64).

Note, too, that the copy of the return must be made "before the report is sent," hence application must be made to the returning officer before or during the count. The candidate is not given express authority to make the copy, but presumably he has the same privilege as his agents. There is no stipulation as to whether the request must be in writing or verbal; probably this will rest with the returning officer.

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 If not, why?*

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ORGANISATION AND BABIES.

Every Labour worker to-day is busily engaged thinking out where and how money may be found for the fighting fund in every constituency. We are bracing up for the General Election. Hopes run high. We have the brains, the enthusiasm, and the only cause worth fighting for. We glory in our poverty because our poverty shows a clean movement; also our poverty is our opportunity for increased effort, and a stimulant to brain waves. Hundreds of us at this moment are filling committee rooms. Yet—in spite of dark insinuations from our opponents—we have no — bombs, nor are we hatching blood-curdling plots. We are talking about fighting funds, bazaars, whist drives, socials, etc.

Every Labour man or woman with organising ability or a gift for making saleable things, or suggesting profitable stunts, are the people who count just now. The "Labour Organiser" is

always the friend of the Labour worker, and here we are again with a suggestion which will help all these activities and the cause of humanity at the same time.

You have seen the advertisements of the great effort of the "Workers' International Russian Relief" to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of Russian children who are orphans and destitute. We are all keen on bringing about the real International Brotherhood of the peoples. Not one of us can resist the cry of a hungry child, no matter of what nationality.

Can you see the connection between your whist drives or bazaars or your kiddies' Christmas tree or stocking, and the famished and homeless Russian baby? Here it is! "The Russian" Peasant Handicraft Association are making all kinds of beautiful, artistic, and useful articles. These are to be sold for the benefit of the orphan children's homes.

There are collar boxes, tobacco barrels, cigarette vases for the men-folk; powder and trinket boxes, bead necklaces, lacquer bowls, sugar bowls, enamel trays for their wives and sweet-hearts; also beautiful hand-made Russian laces, edgings and insertions; dolls, balls and toys of all descriptions for the kiddies.

Here are the points to remember about these articles:—

- They are novelties.
- They are artistic.
- They are inexpensive.
- They are the goods.

We ask you to write at once to Helen Crawford, Children's Homes Department, 26 Bedford Row, W.C.1., for the price list.

You have perhaps been too busy to have possessed yourself of the facts of the need of the children and what is being done to assist them. Briefly, then, may we give you the information.

"The Workers' International Russian Relief" agreed last year to maintain 20,000 orphans; 14,000 are being maintained in more than 100 homes. The cost of maintenance is £8,000 per month. Great Britain's quota is 500 children. We have four homes going with 337 children. There is the Keir Hardie Home with 121 children at Orenburg; Robert Owen Homes No. 1 and No. 2 with 113 children; the International Home with 103 children

at Orenburg. This is our problem, and your backing will be the solution."

Upwards of 50 miners' lodges are backing up this effort in spite of their own hardships and difficulties; 160 Women's Co-operative Guilds are doing their part. What shall we do? Bring the "Organiser" to your next committee meeting. Bring along the proposition. Back it up with the eloquence of the Archangel Gabriel, and success will crown your efforts. The children and yourself will enjoy a happy Christmas.

LILLIE S. TURNER.

WE, US, AND CO.

By FRANK H. EDWARDS.

The circumstances in which not a few unemployed Labour Party agents find themselves to-day must cause reflection regarding the status and security which ought surely to be associated with the onerous position of agent. The agents employed by Unionist and Liberal Associations are freed from those personal anxieties which harass and depress many Labour Party agents. The employees of our opponents enjoy a greater measure of security than do the best circumstanced of Labour Party agents. They have reasonable prospects of continuity of service. They may receive—as some retired agents already do receive—a substantial superannuation allowance. They are to a greater degree untrammelled by the petty criticisms of members of the Party or the hampering decisions of committees. Their duties, by comparison, are much lighter and simpler, and their salaries are higher and paid more regularly. It must be an exceptional case where a Liberal agent, say, has to assist in some endeavour to find the means for his own remuneration.

These differences are easily accounted for. The causes are most apparent. The Liberal and Conservative Parties are dissimilar from the Labour Party in regard to organisation, method, the sources and extent of their funds, and in respect to their composition, functions and objectives. The capitalist political parties are able to do what the Labour Party cannot at the present moment accomplish. It is largely a question of means.

Though Liberal and Conservative agents do not work nearly as hard or half as long as do Labour agents, and though their work is not as detailed or as comprehensive, their status is much more appreciated, and this quite apart from the matter of the respective salaries paid. Admittedly the position of the Labour Party agent is precarious.

The Labour Party is young. In its earlier days it had to rely mainly, almost entirely, on voluntary effort. With its growth, nationally and in the constituencies, the need of regular local and district organisers or agents became evident. In a large number of cases praiseworthy efforts have been made to meet that growing need. One feature of future development will be the provision of ways and means so that there will be no interruption in the work of organisation, and the condition of service for the organisers will require to be made more agreeable and encouraging. To this end responsibility must be shouldered more and more by the local parties. To enable this responsibility to be discharged—in part, at least—the trade union branches should be required by their respective societies to fulfil their duties to the local party to the same degree as the union as a whole does in its relationships with the National Party. Of equal importance, nay, of greater concern, is the development of the individual membership, and the regular collection of contributions. The question of the rate of subscription is one deserving of immediate and full consideration. In this connection the local parties must have some freedom of action, for no fixed figure can be made operative in localities with varying conditions. It is agreed, I think, that the prevalent rate is incapable of meeting essential expenses. It is of prime importance that we should pay our way, as the phrase goes. It is requisite also that we should accumulate reserves and build up a solid political fund in each district, sufficient for all needs, local and Parliamentary. Other means of augmentation may be found, may in fact be necessary.

Let us revert to the matter of subscriptions. It may be conceded that there is a greater likelihood of obtaining, say, 4s. per member per year in regular monthly instalments, than there is of collecting half that amount in a lump-sum payment. There are two considerations: first, with regard to the

party's needs, what shall be the amount of subscription sufficient to meet present or possible future contingencies; and, second, in order to meet the general convenience of members, what shall be the method of collection and the appropriate division of the total subscription so that by quarterly, monthly, or even weekly calls, the full amount may be obtained.

Certainly, we shall not effect improvements by the adoption of a disgruntled attitude, nor will anything be achieved by the adoption of a policy of drift. We must apply ourselves to things as they are and try to alter them rather than suppose that some mysterious metamorphosis will occur simply because we desire an alteration. Difficulties must be faced and effaced. Obstacles are to be surmounted. Continuous and, maybe, prolonged effort may be needed if we are to improve our general organisation. The needs of a stable and developing movement are not fully appreciated by the generality of the members. Our financial involvements and commitments as a political party are not fully understood. A good treasurer who takes a broad view of his duties and responsibilities is one of the most important officials of the local party. The Finance Committee, rightly interpreting its functions, is performing most useful work, none the less beneficial because it is unobtrusive. Clearly such a committee must concern itself with future needs and developments and how to meet them as well as with the immediate liabilities and assets of the party. A Finance Committee which simply sets before itself the work of "cutting down expenses" is performing nothing creditable to itself or advantageous to the movement.

The requirements of the party are easily ascertainable, but the means of meeting those requirements may be lacking. Then it is a matter of the members or certain of them applying themselves in an organised way so that if not this year or next year, certainly as soon as possible, the party will be on such a financial basis that obligations can be entered upon without misgiving. The progressive increase of the individual membership is an indispensable factor. Assume an individual membership of 2,000 (perhaps not next year, but this is possible, indeed, the figure has been exceeded by quite a

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number of the local parties), and grant that the average subscription is 4s. per year (less than 1d. per week). That would realise about £400 per year. There are the affiliation fees, the occasional donations, the proceeds from special efforts, the contribution to particular funds. In all this there is nothing fanciful. It is not presumed that it can be done at once. In many places it cannot be done very soon. But that it can and will be done I have no doubt. Now out of that fund there can be an allocation for the payment of the agent, the establishment of an office, and the provision of equipment. There will be allocations for organisation work of a special kind, for the Municipal Election campaigns, for Parliamentary Election purposes.

The question may arise: Are the financial efforts of the local Labour Party to be mainly concerned with the appointment and payment of an agent? That may be supplemented: Are more members to be enrolled and all to be called upon to sacrifice in order that one man may be regularly employed? Well, a contribution of less than a

penny a week can hardly be described in the majority of cases as a serious sacrifice. Then the engagement and proper remuneration of a competent agent cannot be looked upon as an act of favour to the person legitimately appointed. The wages paid to the agent should be regarded as part of the cost of organisation. The organisation gets value in return for the wages paid.

The advantages are all-round and obvious. The local party will have a full and free choice in regard to the selection of a Parliamentary candidate. Its attitude will be one of dignity and independence. A Parliamentary contest over there will be no interruption of organisation work, no decline in the party's activities, no anxiety or uncertainty as to when or whether former activities may be resumed. The agent will be freed from that anxiety so common at present. He will be assured of continuity of employment and have some security and regularity. Continuous service ought surely to beget confidence, and so there would be better relationships, greater freedom for the display of individuality, and the status of the Labour Party agent would be raised.

A JUDGE ON BANNERS.

The following remarks by Mr. Justice Bruce in the St. George's-in-the-East Election Petition on the distinction between notice cards and marks of distinction provide a useful guide to electioneers as a somewhat difficult point. The Corrupt Practices Acts are particularly difficult in definitions, and here an Election Judge sought to supply the deficiency.

"The Seventh Section of the 17th and 18th Victoria, Chapter 102, renders it unlawful for a candidate in regard to an election, by himself or his agent, directly or indirectly to give or provide to or for any inhabitant of the borough for which such election is had any cockade, ribbon, or other mark of distinction.

The Sixteenth Section of the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1883, enacts that no payment or contract for payment shall, for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of a candidate at any election, be made on account of flags, banners, cockades, ribbons, or other marks of distinction, and the section enacts that the person making such payment shall be guilty of illegal payment. So far back as 1854 the Legislature discouraged the providing of marks of distinction, and rendered payments for or on account of marks of distinction illegal payments. The more recent Act of 1883, in somewhat different language prohibits the payment for banners or other marks of distinction. Mr. Justice Vaughan Williams, in his judgment in the Stepney case (in 1892) stated that he considered the words 'other marks of distinction' as the governing words of the clause, in the sense that they qualified the words that went before. At all events, the words 'marks of distinction' are important words, and they must be carefully considered in order to arrive at the meaning of the enactment.

"It is, I believe, because these words have not always been considered that in some cases difficulty has arisen as to the understanding of the section. What is meant by marks of distinction? Marks of distinction, I think, are party badges, indicating by their colour or shape or otherwise that the person using them belongs to the party of one of the candidates. A thing that contains no

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address, and gives no information respecting the opinions of the candidates, but is simply intended to be used to indicate that the person exhibiting it, or inhabiting the house on which it is exhibited, belongs to a particular party, is, I think, a mark of distinction within the meaning of the Act.

"The Legislature intended to draw a wide distinction between spending money on bills or placards or circulars requesting assistance or support in the election, or giving information respecting the opinions of a candidate, or the places where his meetings are to be held, or the time and place and manner of voting, and spending money in things that are mere badges, and can only be used to make a show. I cannot regard the pieces of linen with the petitioner's portrait on them, and the words 'Vote for Benn,' as anything more than party badges. I can draw no distinction between the words 'Vote for Benn' and the words on the strips of canvas in the Stepney case 'Isaacson for Stepney.' The portraits on linen to the number of 120, and portraits on paper backed with linen to the number of 1,000, were mounted on laths, in order it is said to be nailed to the houses throughout the constituency. But even so I think that they would still be marks of distinction. I adopt the language of Mr. Justice Cave in the Stepney case, in which he says: 'What was intended to be struck at was the waste of money at elections which served no useful purpose at all. A maximum was fixed; this, that, and the other mode of spending money was made illegal; and this is, as it seems to me, partly for the purpose of preventing waste of money; and if it has any other object it is that of preventing a man gaining a false show of popularity by laying out his money in flags and banners, and ribbons and cockades, and things of that kind.' As I put it in the course of the argument, there are a number of persons whose political feelings are extremely weak, to the extent of being sometimes non-existent, and who, if they care to vote at all, like to be in the majority. Everyone knows what a powerful influence that exercises, and how important it is to win the first elections that are decided, because there are many people who love to go with the flowing tide. It seems to me that if there were any object beyond the diminution of needless and useless expense, that may have been the object

which the Legislature had in view. If that were so, of course it is immaterial whether the banner is carried about the streets or whether it is fixed upon a house. In either case, if the place is covered with blue canvas advertisements or red canvas advertisements, as the case may be, hanging on private houses, the result undoubtedly produced is an impression that the parties who display the most decorations are in the ascendancy."

WHAT IS A SUB-AGENT ?

With the exception of the expression of the Judges' opinion at Sunderland on the definition of "Agent for the purpose of publication" under the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, 1895, the only decision to be found on the definition of "Sub-Agent" is that given in the judgment of Lord Kyllachy in the Elgin and Nairn case. Agents who read Lord Kyllachy's definition will realise more fully the desirability of and necessity for a special retainer and definite instructions being given to each sub-agent employed. The following are the material portions of the judgment :

"I do not think there is any definition of the duties of a sub-agent, but it sufficiently appears there he is a person through whom payments may be made at the request of the principal agent. In all other respects his agency seems to be perfectly general. Then a polling agent is defined by a reference to the Ballot Act and to a previous Act of 1843, which is a general enactment applicable to the whole of the United Kingdom. I do not read the section; it was referred to by counsel; and it sufficiently indicates that a polling agent is a person who is to represent the candidate in the polling booth to detect personation.

"The only political disability which the Statute applies to any person who is paid for his services is that his right to vote is suspended for that election; but, as I read the Election Acts, the employee is in no way inhibited from using his personal exertions as an elector to influence the votes of other electors; nor, so far as I see, is there any restriction on the right of a paid agent or officer

to render services to the candidate such as he may think fitting, except that he cannot be employed in the payment of election expenses unless he is the sub-agent.

"But it is right to say, as the point has been raised, that in my opinion the duty of an election agent in regard to payments is that he shall satisfy himself that the account has been justly incurred and fairly charged, and also that the payment must come from himself. But if he performs those duties, I think he may send a messenger, or may ask a friend who is willing to undertake the duty of a messenger, to carry the money and get the receipt. It is like the case of paying by a cheque where, of course, the bank pay the money on the authority of an agent, and I should regret it if the statutory provisions of this Act were capable of being worked in a way which would invalidate an election, when there was nothing done of the description which Parliament truly intended to prohibit."

"The Candidates' and Agents' Guide."
(Richards) O.O.P.

CANVASSING BY PAID ELECTION CLERK.

The question whether a paid election clerk is justified in canvassing is a question which has been often put to me at election times, and, acting upon the opinion of the present Master of the Rolls when Attorney-General, I have always advised that a paid election clerk may canvass in his spare time, but not as part and parcel of the duties of his office. In the Lichfield Petition Mr. Justice Bruce thus dealt with the facts of the case:—

"From the evidence before us I cannot entertain any doubt that Shakeshaft and Cheshire (the paid election clerks) were employed *systematically* in canvassing. Shakeshaft worked in Alrewas and Harlaston. It is said that he was employed as a clerk. Cheshire was employed as a messenger in Armitage.

"Several persons who were called as witnesses proved that both Shakeshaft and Cheshire asked for their

votes, went about with canvassing books, and acted as canvassers. This evidence might have been explained by showing that the particular acts deposed to were *exceptional and occasional only*.

"I cannot help asking myself the question, 'Who did carry on the canvass? No volunteer canvassers are called, and I find it very difficult to accept the explanation.'"

It will be seen that Mr. Justice Bruce practically confirms the advice given by me, and that so long as the canvassing is not systematic or part of their regular work, but only auxiliary and voluntary, clerks may occasionally and intermittently be so employed. But when no volunteer canvassers work in the district it is inadvisable to pursue such a course.

"The Candidates' and Agents' Guide"
(Richards), O.O.P.

(Continued from page 3.)

Most efficient work may be done by the Primrose League between the excitements of election contests. Then is really its best time to work. Its mission is one of political instruction, and the quiet voice of fair persuasion can be most effectively uttered when political passion is not warping the judgment. Its pleasant meetings and social gatherings, at which the gratuitous entertainment consists of music and singing or a dramatic performance—like those mentioned by one of the Judges in connection with the Repeal of Corn Laws agitation—bring together people who would otherwise not meet. The member or candidate need not often be present, though, of course, he would be there when occasion served. The meetings and gatherings should, whenever possible, be addressed politically by neighbours and friends, amongst whom dames should not be conspicuous by their absence. In a word, the Primrose League, in its own peculiar and wholly independent way, should give to the phrase "The Democracy," a wider, brighter, more loyal, and more constitutional and national meaning and vitality than it has ever had before. In this way it has hitherto worked with the best results, and by perseverance in that course it will best carry forward that good work.

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